

**Children in Foster Care  
Effect of Visitation on Length of Time in Out of Home Care  
in  
Daviness County, Kentucky**

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## Research Abstract

### Children in Foster Care: Effect of Visitation on Length of Time in Out of Home Care: Daviess County

The purpose of this study is to identify if there is a correlation between the frequency and quality of the visits that children have with their family and the length of time that children remain in OOHC. The research is aimed to identify the importance of attachment in the reunification process. Throughout the literature review, visitation was found to be vital in maintaining and enhancing the attachment that is necessary for reunification to be successful. The sample for the quantitative study consisted of all children who entered foster care through the Department of Community Based Services (DCBS) in Daviess County Kentucky for reasons of abuse, neglect or dependency during the calendar year 2002. Data for the quantitative study was gathered from existing case records for a period of up to one year following each child's entry into care. For the qualitative study, three families were purposively selected based on the available documentation about the quality of the visits between the child(ren) and their parents. Several interesting findings resulted from the analysis of the quantitative data, including that minority children in the sample exited care faster than the Caucasian children in the sample. Themes found in the qualitative data seemed to indicate that there is a relationship between the worker's overall observations regarding the quality of the visits and the length of time the children spent in OOHC. The results of this study will provide a variety of information about children in out of home care including various factors that relate to their length of time in care that can be used in future policy development.

# Children in Foster Care: Effect of Visitation on Length of Time in Out of Home Care in Daviess County, Kentucky



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# Introduction

## ➤ Program description

- DCBS provides extensive services
- Services to families who have had their children removed by the court
- Providing opportunities for visitation very important

## ➤ Literature review

- Attachment
- Visitation
- Reunification

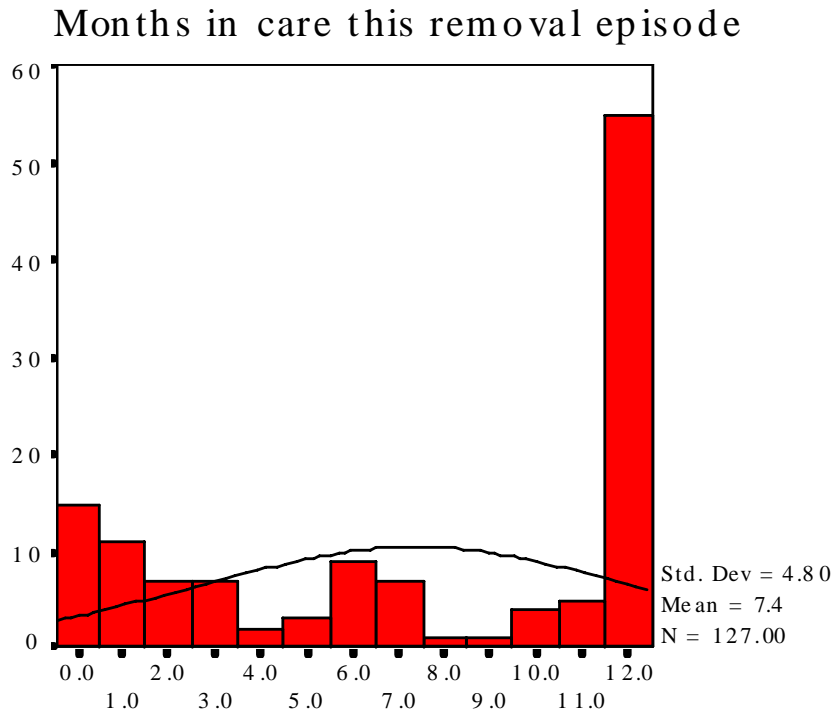
# Quantitative Research Questions

- Is there a correlation between the frequency of the visits that children have with their family and the length of time that children remain in OOHC?
- Is there a relationship between the number of placements and the reason the child was placed in OOHC?
- Is there a relationship between the reason the child was placed in OOHC and the length of time the child remained in OOHC?
- Is there a relationship between a child's race and the length of time in OOHC?
- Is there a relationship between parent's employment status and length of time in OOHC?
- Is there a relationship between having a visitation agreement and the length of time in OOHC?

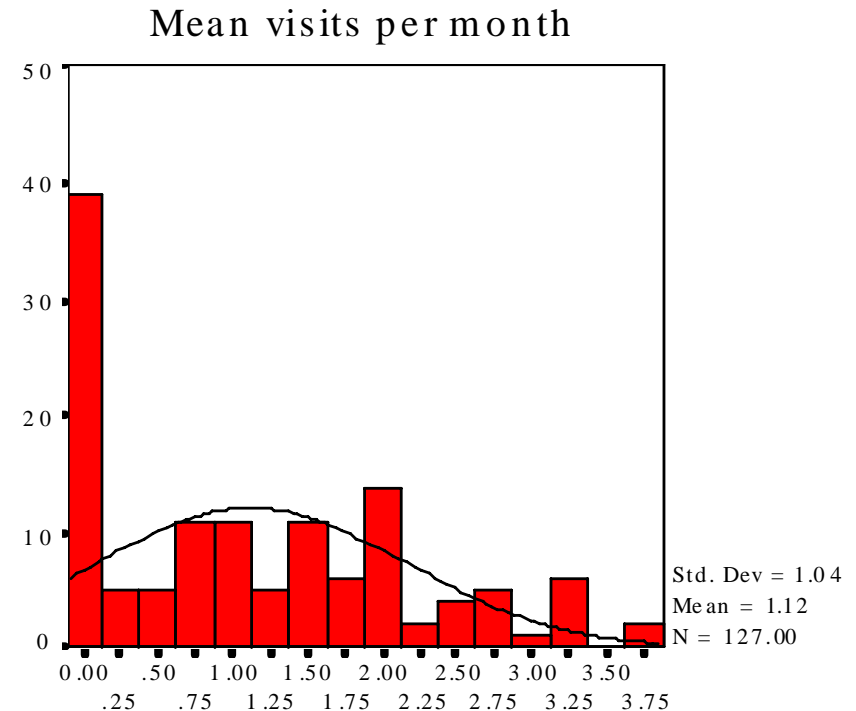
# Design and Sample

- All children entering out of home care in 2002 in Daviess county Kentucky. 137 children from 63 families
- Existing data obtained from case records
- Data from up to 12 months in care
- 52.8% Males, 47.2% Females
- 18.1% African American; 1.6% American Indian; 72.4% Caucasian; 7.9% Hispanic
- Mean age of children 6.5 years, min age - newborn, max age 17.5 years
- 54.3% Single Parents; 27.6% Blended Families; 14.2% Nuclear Families; 3.9% Other Relative
- 37% Returned to Parent; 23.6% Placed with relatives; .8% Emancipated; 38.6% Did not exit w/in 12 months

# Correlation - freq of visits & months in care



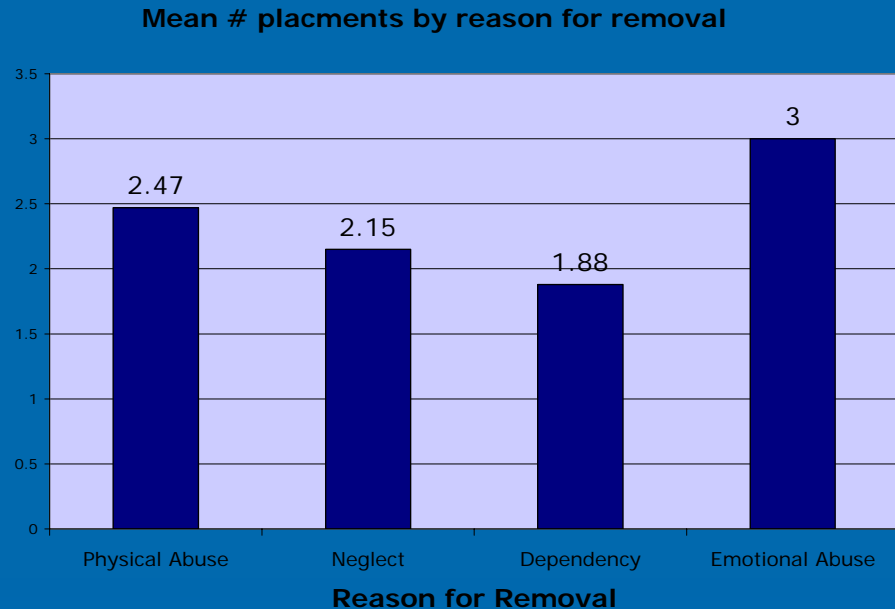
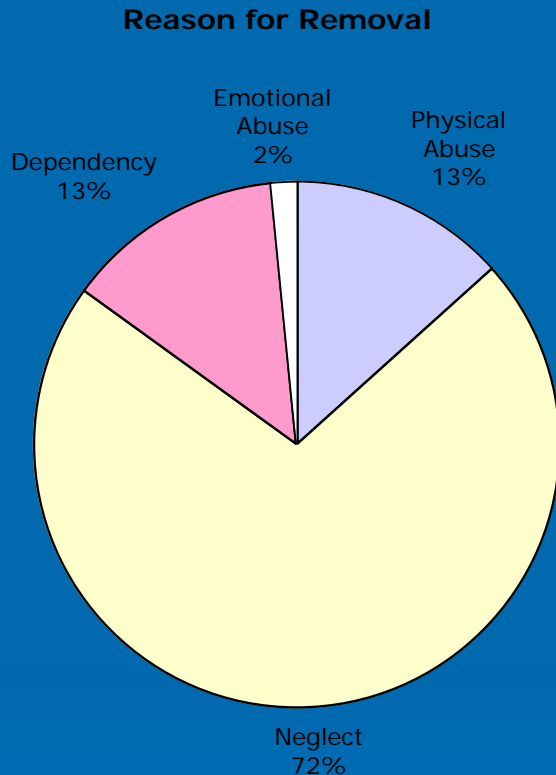
Months in care this removal episode



Mean visits per month

- A Correlation test between months in care and average # of visits p/month resulted in  $r(125) = .193$ ,  $p < .05$ . There is a low positive correlation that is significant. Mean visits p/month = 1.1. Mean months in care = 7.4

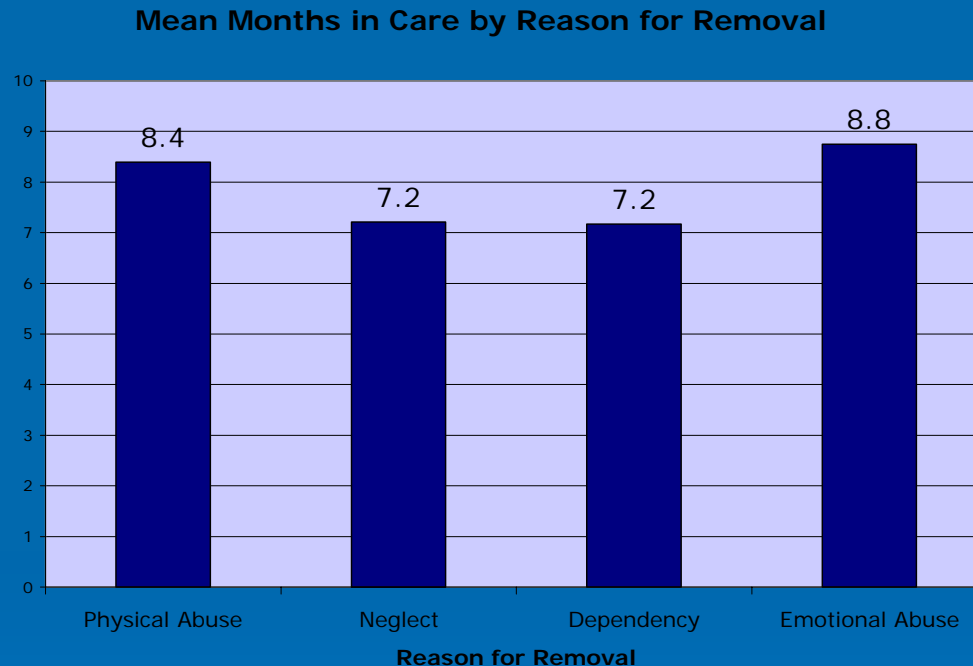
# Relationship between # placements and reason child removed



- A one way Anova was conducted using reason for removal as the independent variable and number of placements as the dependent variable.  $F(3) = .641$ ,  $p > .05$ . The mean number of placements for the sample ( $N = 127$ ) was 2.17 with a standard deviation of 1.5. The lowest number of placements was 1 and the highest number was 9.

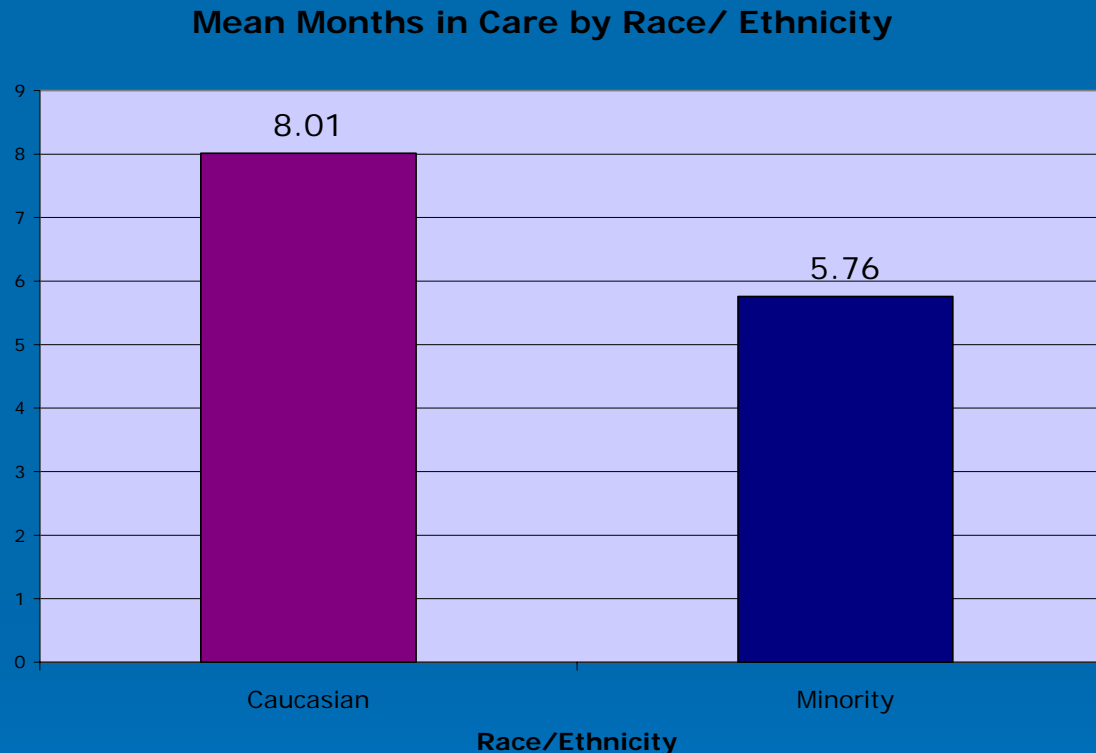


# Relationship between reason removed and months in care



- A one-way Anova was conducted using reason for removal as the independent variable and months in care as the dependent variable.  $F(3) = 3.49$ ,  $p > .05$ . Results were not significant. The mean months in care ( $N=127$ ) was 7.4 with standard deviation of 4.8.

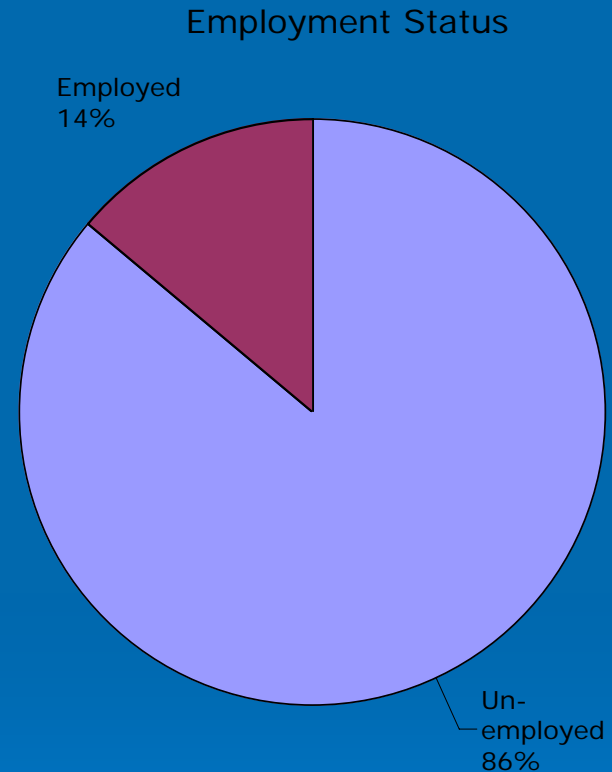
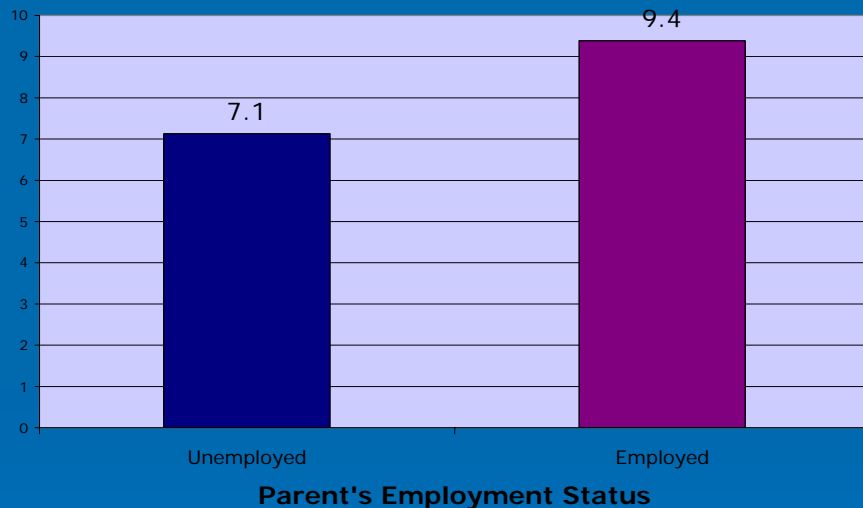
# Relationship between Race/Ethnicity and Months in Care



- An independent samples t-test was conducted with race/ethnicity as the dependent variable and months in care as the independent variable,  $t(125) = 2.397$ ,  $p < .05$ . Results were significant. Mean months in care for minorities was 5.76 and mean months in care for Caucasians was 8.01

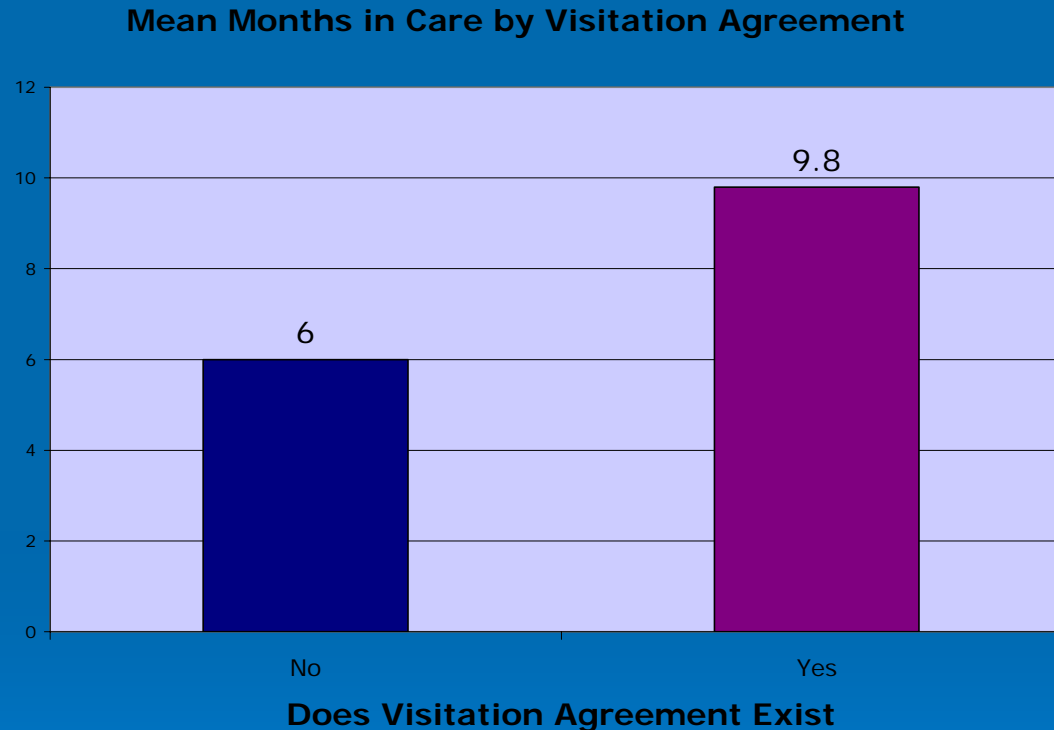
# Relationship between parent's employment status and months in care

Mean Months in Care by Parent's Employment Status



- An independent samples t-test was conducted with parent's employment status as the independent variable and months in care as the dependent variable ( $t(25.44) = -2.182, p < .05$ , equal variances not assumed). Results were significant.

# Relationship between existence of visitation agreement and months in care



- An independent samples t-test was conducted with the existence of visitation agreement as independent variable and months in care is dependent variable,  $t(125) = -4.7$ ,  $p < .01$ . Results were significant.

# Discussion

- Findings do not support hypothesis that the more visits a child has while in OOHC the quicker they will exit care
- Surprising findings
  - Children who did not have a visitation agreement on file exited care faster than those who did
  - Minority children exited care faster than Caucasian children did
  - Children whose parents were unemployed exited care faster than those whose parents were employed

# Qualitative Research Question



- How do interactions between children and their family members influence children's length of stay in out of home care?

# Qualitative Design and Sample

- 3 families selected purposively from quantitative sample based on amount of qualitative information available in case record
- Examined visitation using chart file review form
- All 3 families Caucasian
- Family 1 had 3 children ages 2 years thru 8 years removed due to neglect
- Family 2 had 4 children ages 7 months thru 6 years removed due to neglect and physical abuse
- Family 3 had 1 child age 1 year removed due to physical abuse
- Family 1 - children returned at 12 months
- Family 2 - 3 of 4 children returned at 9.5 months, 1 child remained in OOHC due to behavioral problems
- Family 3 - child not returned but in relative placement

# Family 1

- Activities: played ball, wrote on chalkboard, went to park, read to children
- Affection: hug, kiss, smile, praise, distant towards one child, upset by bond w/ foster parent
- Discipline: “loud and gruff”, “often threatens but does not follow through”, “lack of direction”, “don’t seem to be able to manage negative behaviors.” Beginning to see improvement in later visits.
- Overall Observations: Visits “tense”, “strained”, “father seemed like a stranger to children”, “Mother does not know how to do activity ‘with’ children”. Visits seemed to get better as time went on: “Visit went well”, “visit calmer today”, “Very pleasant visit.”



# Family 2

- Activities: threw ball, played patty cake, engaged in pretend play, read to children
- Affection: positives: held child, brought birthday present, praised child, negatives: verbally aggressive, very brusque with one child
- Discipline: redirection, “counted to 3 but didn’t follow through”, “raised voice”, “grabbed child by arm”, time out
- Overall observations: “visit went well”, “good interactions with children”

# Family 3

- Activities: played with child, read book to child, sat in chair and watched child play
- Affection: hugging and kissing child, rocked child
- Overall Observations: “Mother appears to become ‘bored’ quickly during visits”, Mother talks with other adults rather than playing with child, “little interaction with child and mother”, “concerns on interaction and bonding.”

# Discussion

- All families seemed to engage in typical activities with their children and show some degree of affection
- Worker's overall observations seemed to be linked to child's length of time in care. Family 2, whose children went home earliest had primarily positive comments regarding overall quality. Regarding Family 3, whose child remained in care, the worker had concerns about parent/child interaction and lack of bonding. Family 1, whose children were returned after 12 months, had lower quality of visits in the beginning but showed improvement as time went on

# Limitations/Suggestions for Further Research

- Used only existing data - often times documentation by workers was not completed so data may not be accurate
- Only gathered data for 12 month period after child entered care. Suggest additional longer term study - such as 24 months following entry into care instead of just 12 months
- Could observe visitation between parents and children for qualitative portion instead of relying on case documentation
- Additional study could examine why findings occurred in quantitative study